

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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MISSIONS

That is not obedience to the Great Commission which practically excludes the "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." That cannot be called a gospel church whose highest aspiration is not the saving of souls. Neither is that a gospel church which sets limits to this duty other than the limits of the world. It was this inexorable logic which within the century has overcome an almost invincible prejudice against missionary enterprise in all the churches, and set them to the work of world wide evangelization. It is the accent of divine authority in this clarion command which is annually pouring millions of money into heathen lands, and carrying to the uttermost parts of the earth the glorious banner of Christ's everlasting kingdom.

What is all this to us? We claim to be a gospel church. We insist upon a literal obedience to the precepts of the gospel, and particularly in respect to our form of baptism, which we derive from that same Commission. We inveigh against a practical obedience as inadmissible in theory and unsafe in practice. We insist upon the importance of honesty in religion and morals. Of all others, how can we, WE, the Brethren church, claiming to hold the primitive gospel, teaching strict obedience to its commands, strenuously enforcing literal and unwavering obedience to the baptism of the Commission, how can *we* be indifferent to that command of the Commission upon which all the rest is founded, the marching orders of the militant church?

We do not say that the church as a body is indifferent to its missionary responsibilities. We know on the contrary that the missionary conscience is alive and awake in many of our members, and that our conferences have sought to give it wise direction and practical effect, but until the policy of *annual* conferences gave opportunity for continuous effort, frequent review and earnest discussion, there was almost a total lack of that leading, that initiative and that organization which was necessary to effectualize the missionary sentiment of the church, and it lay in a dormant and disorganized, discouraged condition which rendered effort futile and unavailing. Here and there were sporadic endeavors, occasional individual enterprises, struggling along without co-operation, without organization, without respon-

sibility, in a loose, haphazard, happy-go-lucky way, creditable enough to the zealous preacher who was thus trying singlehanded to discharge the responsibilities of a whole church, but discreditable enough to the leadership which was indifferent to this confusion, or unable to bring order out of this chaos.

But most happily a different policy has finally organized the church, and bound it closely together in a rational co-operative body, directing its missionary energies in an orderly, economical and intelligent manner, widening its sphere of operations, and gradually preparing the foundation of a large, a creditable, a fruitful, a glorious work. What are most to be guarded against are those reactionary influences which would again reduce us to the limits of disintegration and chaos. Forward, is the command. "Go." If we go backwards, our title of Progressive would henceforth be ridiculous. For several important reasons we must keep straight on. The first is, that our missionary work may live, and not die. The second is, that our churches at home may live, and not die. Are these reasons not sufficient? God blesses the missionary church. When the first missionary society in America was organized, application was made to Congress for the charter. In the debate, a member of Congress facetiously remarked, that the proposed charter seemed to be a bill for the export of religion, to which he was decidedly opposed on the ground that we had none to spare. Another member replied that religion was a commodity of such a nature that the more we sent abroad, the more we had left at home. That is exactly the case and statistical information is not wanting which goes to show that in all respects those are the most prosperous local churches who regularly make the most liberal contributions to the great cause of missions.

The proposition to lay the foundation for our missionary work in a small endowment of \$25,000 should be carried into effect without delay. But we should not forget that the only true and enduring foundation must be laid in the hearts of our membership, and in that spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice which is the very essence of the gospel, that spirit of Christ, which unless we have, "we are none of his." Have our pastors earnestly and perseveringly sought to cultivate this spirit? If not, have they done or left undone their most important duty? And last, but not least, what will the Master say?